



**Bird Island Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 7, 2016, 4 pm
The Regency Member Clubhouse Meeting Room, Sunset Beach**

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
NC Coastal Land Trust	No
NC Coastal Federation	No
Bird Island Preservation Society - Bill Ducker	Yes
Sunset Beach Police Department	No
Town of Sunset Beach Administration	Yes
<u>Community Members and Community Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
Sue Weddle	No
Noelle Kehrberg	Yes
Jim Barber	Yes
Sunset Beach Turtle Patrol - Carmel Zetts	Yes
Cape Fear Audubon	No
<u>Others Present</u>	
Hope Sutton, DCM/NCCR, Stewardship Coordinator and Southern Sites Manager	

Reserve-wide Administrative Update

- *Staffing News*
 - Elise Gilchrist joined the Reserve team in August as our Communications and Project Management Specialist. Elise has a Bachelor's degree in Animal Behavior. Shortly after graduating, she moved to Thailand and spent two years working as a research assistant for a non-profit organization that studies Asian elephant cognition and promotes wildlife conservation. It was through this experience that she recognized her passion for science

communication. She then held a position at a marine conservation field station in Mexico working as a media and communications specialist.

- Kate (Murray) Jones joined the Reserve in October as our Northern Sites Manager. Kate has a Bachelor's degree in Biology with a minor in Environmental Studies from the College of Charleston and a professional degree in Landscape Architecture from The University of British Columbia. She most recently worked with The Nature Conservancy in natural area management of the Nags Head Woods Preserve and served as the GIS analyst and community engagement coordinator for the NC Coastal Resilience project. Additionally, Kate has landscape design and planning experience in residential and municipal settings and currently serves on the Town of Nags Head's Planning Board.

- *NCNERR Management Plan Update*

Staff are continuing to work on the management plan update for the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve. NOAA is reviewing initial draft chapters of the plan as they are completed to ensure that all required elements are included per the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) management plan guidelines; approximately half of the chapters have been reviewed or are under review currently. The Reserve will then seek input on the full initial draft plan from the LACs, N.C. Coastal Resources Commission (CRC), and the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality. NOAA will then review the final draft management plan for content and compliance with the NERRS management plan guidelines. A 30-day public comment period and three public meetings will be held on the final draft management plan prior to the plan's final publication. Staff are planning to review the full initial draft plan with the LACs at their spring 2017 meetings and share the plan and LAC comments on the plan with the CRC at their April 2017 meeting.

- *Budget*

- The Division of Coastal Management received \$619,322 from NOAA for operation of the NCNERR portion of the Coastal Reserve during this fiscal year, up \$24,872 from last year. The additional funds are being used to cover fixed cost increases and to fund a portion of the temporary staffing positions through the annual budget rather than relying on a variety of different funding sources that vary from year to year.
- The Division of Coastal Management's state appropriations were reduced by \$27,173 this fiscal year as required by the Department of Environmental Quality. As a result, the appropriations allocated for the Reserve program were reduced by approximately \$5,000.

- *Periodic Rules Review*

The Coastal Reserve's rules, 07O, are scheduled to be reviewed by the Rules Review Commission in June 2017 as part of the Periodic Review and Expiration of Existing Rules process (G.S. 150B-21.3A). Staff classified each rule citation in 07O as necessary with substantive public interest, necessary without substantive public interest, or unnecessary per G.S. 150B-21.3A (c)(1). Staff then revised the initial draft classification based on input from the LACs and the CRC supported the revised initial draft classification at its July 2016 meeting. The Department of Environmental Quality approved revised initial draft

classification and the classification is currently out for public comment through November 21, 2016. As of October 21, 2016, the approximate mid-point of the public comment period, no comments had been received. After the public comment period closes, staff will compile a report for submittal to the Rules Review Commission that responds to comments received and amends the initial agency determinations if necessary. The LACs will have the opportunity to review the draft report in January 2017 prior to presentation of the report to the CRC at its February 2017 meeting. Any proposed amendments to the rule language received during the public comment period will be considered during the readoption process.

Site Update/Old Business

- *Storm impacts*

Hurricane Matthew resulted in some fairly significant dune breaching/overwash in the area of the historic Mad Inlet. A noticeable amount of overwash also occurred in the area of small dunes very close to the jetty (in the area of the Army Corps property and State line). These areas have the potential to provide nesting habitat for colonial shorebirds, which historically nested at the site but have not in recent years. Storms such as this present the opportunity to observe the site's natural character and ability to respond to storm events. The mailbox and one bench were washed out but have since been replaced by local volunteers. The western Coastal Reserve sign was also washed out, but was found and reinstalled by BIPS volunteers. The nature trail sign was lost and will be replaced by Reserve staff in the near future.

- *Seasonal activities*

The Bird Island Preservation Society (BIPS) stewards and volunteer field trip leaders did a fantastic job again during the summer of 2016. Stewards completing informal patrols contributed 408 hours of volunteer service. Fourteen stewards also volunteer as public field trip leaders. They led 14 public field trips for a total of 893 participants between June 1 and August 31. The Reserve worked closely with these volunteers, providing support for these programs with materials such as signage, scavenger hunt cards, and brochures, as well as with some training and organizational support. Volunteers continued to visit the nature trail throughout the season to better establish the trail and complete light maintenance. The BIPS volunteer stewards had a meeting and social to mark the end of the season on October 13. Frank Nesmith's 90th birthday was also celebrated at the gathering. Reserve staff attended and participated in debriefing the season's activities and brainstorming about improvements for the 2017 season. The Reserve continues to be extremely appreciative of the efforts of the local volunteers and recognizes the significance of the time and energy the local community contributes to stewardship and outreach at this site. The sea turtle season was successful, with 10 of the 14 nests associated with Sunset Beach occurring on Reserve property. All of the nests hatched prior to Hurricane Matthew with a resulting hatch success rate of 93.8%.

- *Sunset at Sunset*

The Reserve again shared a booth with BIPS at the Sunset at Sunset festival on October 1. Throughout the day, Reserve staff and BIPS volunteers interacted with approximately 145 attendees. Information was given out about the site and the steward and field trip volunteer programs. Hands on activities included shell identification and the coastal organism matching game.

New Business

- *Habitat mapping*

The Reserve is undertaking a habitat mapping project, similar to the work conducted at the National Estuarine Research Reserve. The Stewardship Coordinator/Southern Sites Manager has been working with the Research Coordinator and GIS Specialist to complete this process. This project primarily uses a remote sensing approach, with aerial imagery being used to delineate and classify habitat types across the site. Groundtruthing was completed in October, with final maps to be available in the coming months. These maps will be used by the Reserve to understand habitat change over time and will be available to the public, researchers, and educators for a variety of uses.

- *Work day*

A date will be selected for a trail maintenance and sign installation work day during the off season. The Reserve's work study student has a replacement trailhead sign ready and trail markers are on order. A small handful of volunteers working with a couple of Reserve staff should be able to complete these tasks in a half day. Several members expressed interest in participating in a work day.

- *Paddling trail*

The Reserve is considering applying for some grant funding to design and install paddling trails at a number of the Coastal Reserve sites. Funding may be available through the North Carolina Trails Program administered by State Parks. Options for development could include hosting community input meetings to support trail design, producing maps of potential routes, and/or installing markers along the route(s) in the marsh and tidal creeks. The Reserve requested input from local advisory committee members regarding the community's interest in this type of access facilitation/information. Members briefly discussed paddling trail options and suggested that the community would be very supportive of this type of project. Members were interested in all three paddling trail elements proposed.

Roundtable Discussion

- None

Public Comments

- None

Action Items

- Reserve staff will email committee members the draft report on the periodic rules review process in January 2017.
- Reserve staff will contact committee members early in 2017 to establish dates for the year's meetings.